

PRACTICAL REMARKS

ON

RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

GENERAL:

LIKEWISE, ON THE

NATURE and ADVANTAGES

OF

EVANGELICAL CHURCHES.

Addressed more especially to the Congregation and Members  
of the Church at

PINNERS - HALL.

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By A. CROLE.

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Let all things be done decently, and in order. — PAUL.

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L O N D O N:

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## INTRODUCTION.

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DEARLY BELOVED,

**T**HIRTEEN years have now elapsed since that relation was formed between us, and which happily, through much mercy and grace, continues unto this day ; at the commencement of which, we took up a resolution to form ourselves into a religious society, entirely upon the plan of the New Testament. Being then, as we are still, without a particular connexion with any other denomination whatever, have all along thought for ourselves, and acted according to the dictates of our own consciences : the result has answered our expectations, and the church of Christ raised up at *Pinners-Hall*, enjoys her liberties, a perfect peace, and the inexpressible pleasure of seeing her members increase in number, and in an evangelical conformity to Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour.

B

My



My heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that ye may stand fast in the Lord, practically contend for the faith and honors of our eternal King, walk before him in all holiness and truth, and at last meet together in the kingdom and glory of God our heavenly Father. Your happiness and my own, increased by so many acts of kindness and marks of genuine friendship, are so immediately interwoven and inseparably connected, *that I live if ye stand fast in the Lord;*<sup>a</sup> and I hope to the latest period of my life, by a faithful ministry, a sedulous pastoral care, and many prayers, to demonstrate how much you are the joy, the pride, and the delight of my heart. Frequently from the pulpit, and now from the press, I have taken an opportunity of recommending to your faith and affection, the lovely character and beautiful order of our Lord Jesus Christ. To you no kind of apology will be necessary, either for this mode of address, or for the subject which now claims your attention; yet it may be proper, both for the sake of others, as well as for your own satisfaction, just to say in a few words what gave rise to its present introduction. Taking a survey of the professing world in general, there appears much confusion, strange disorder, and, what is worse still, both doctrinal and practical licentiousness abound.

<sup>a</sup> 1 Thef. iii. 8.



Truth, like Paul's ship and mariners, seems to have suffered a kind of shipwreck; while *some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship<sup>b</sup>*, are endeavouring to effect an escape safe to land, and but few among them even aiming at a complete and conscientious adherence to all the truth. Prejudice curtailing it among some, ignorance among others, and a very respectable quantum of it, is thrown aside among the number of non-essentials: hence follows a more than ordinary claim to catholicism and liberality. Excellent as these virtues may be, yet they are a dear purchase, at the expence either of truth or of a good conscience.

The confusion and anarchy which so much abound, are considerably increased by the presumptuous intrusion of incompetent characters in the sacred Ministry; by a speculation (peculiar to these days) of erecting company edifices of public worship, then ticketing them off for the purpose of private emolument; by those also, who having no fixed principles of their own, are perpetually depreciating the characters of those who have, as an unsociable sect of bigots. From these and similar causes, it hath happened that congregations are crumbled down into irregular parties, often ill instructed, without the shadow

<sup>b</sup> Acts xxvii. 44.

of discipline, and not unfrequently grossly ignorant, or plentifully larded with a wild enthusiasm.

In this part of Great-Britain, there are several articles of religious truth peculiarly unpopular; hence from circumstances of education, from the established emoluments of office annexed to a particular form of Christianity, and from the pride and self-sufficiency of human nature, a combined influence is produced against them, which hitherto has determined the religious profession of a great majority; so that our wonder may cease, on account of much truth being either neglected or forsaken.

As I consider the principles of our dissent from the established religion, and the practice of Independent Churches, as to their order and discipline, to be the pure and gracious institutions of the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and as none other (without infringement of his prerogative) can be established in their room, or answer the same invaluable purposes, I must esteem them worthy of all acceptance, and earnestly desire the propagation and practice of them, among all who *love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, Eph. vi. 24.

Happy

Happy for us, that we live at a time, and in a favored country, wherein we are allowed the free exercise of our holy religion; wherein the principles of religious and civil liberty are better known than in any other part or period of the world. We live at a time wherein we enjoy those invaluable privileges, for which our worthy ancestors suffered, and through whose blood they are conveyed down to us, their ungrateful posterity. We have, moreover, the happiness of living under the auspicious reign of a PRINCE, whose royal heart disdains the remotest intention of persecution. Long may he reign the beloved and affectionate Father of a religious and loyal people.

These circumstances, related above, will teach us to pity the obstinacy of those who will not learn, to beware of the influence of national prejudices, to be thankful for the mercies we enjoy, and to see the necessity of a more pure and practical conformity to our Lord Jesus Christ, as the King of Zion.

As this is our peculiar interest, so it will be an exalting honor. When a pastor and his people thus maintain the purity of the gospel, and shall have finished their course upon earth, God himself will approve in heaven, and other  
evangelical



evangelical churches will not fail to acknowledge,  
*They were both righteous before God, walking in all  
the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blame-  
less, Luke i. 6.*

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## PRACTICAL REMARKS, &c.

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### The NATURE of a GOSPEL CHURCH,

*As distinguished from all other Communities.*

THE kingdom of Jesus Christ, as exhibited to men in the plan and confederation of his churches, is entirely made up of spiritual materials, cemented together by the bonds of truth and love, wherein believers are mutually pledged, for the purposes of spiritual edification, and the glory of Christ. The officers, the members, the ordinances, the laws and privileges, of this kingdom are all spiritual, totally distinct from the kingdoms of this world, neither dependent upon them, nor subject to them, more or less. To reckon such persons members of Christ's kingdom, and of that church which he hath ordained, who are hardly tolerable in a well-

well-governed political common-wealth, is at once unreasonable and profane, a reproach to the name of Christ, and a disgrace to that society which claims them for its own. "But it has  
 " To come to pass (says the great Dr. OWEN)  
 " that let men be ever so notoriously and fla-  
 " gitously wicked, until they become the pests  
 " of the earth, yet are they esteemed to belong  
 " to the church of Christ; and not only so, but  
 " it is thought little less than schism to forbid  
 " them the communion of the church, in all its  
 " sacred privileges. And an old opinion of the  
 " unlawfulness of separation from a church, on  
 " account of the mixture of wicked men in it,  
 " is made a scare-crow to frighten men from  
 " attempting the reformation of the greatest  
 " evils, and a covert for the composing churches  
 " of such members only." With the Bible in our  
 hands there can be no difficulty, a child may  
 find out the scriptural characters of those persons  
 who belong to the church of Christ; they being  
 evidently such as are visibly *called to be saints*<sup>b</sup>,  
 that are *sanctified in Christ Jesus*<sup>c</sup>; or they are  
 such as make an open profession of their faith in  
 Christ Jesus, of the subjection of their souls and  
 consciences unto the authority of Christ in the  
 gospel, their readiness to yield obedience to him

<sup>a</sup> Vid. the True Nature of a Gospel Church, &c. page 2.

<sup>b</sup> Rom. i. 7.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. i. 2.



in all his commands, and who by their life and conversation justify their title to the honorable distinction of Christ's disciples<sup>d</sup>. Such only are worthy communicants at the Lord's table; such only may warrantably be admitted into the sacred pale of the church; and such only are capable of fellowship either with Christ himself or his members.

" Non et placidis cœant immitia, non ut

" Serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni.

Translated thus:

" But not that nature should revers'd appear,

" Mix mild with fierce, and gentle with severe;

" Profane her laws to contradiction's hight,

" Tygers with lambs, with serpents birds unite."

Therefore to what class men belong, whether to Christ or the world, may certainly be known; yet our judgment must be formed, not upon some occult qualities, but upon those visible evidences which are clear, and lie within our reach. These evidences may be comprehended in the three following particulars, viz. Their Spirit, Faith, and Conduct; and when there is sufficient reason to conclude that their profession

Acts x. 10. 2 Cor. viii. 5. chap. ix. 13.

is sincere, their faith scriptural, and their conduct unblemished, no church can with any consistency deny them the privileges of Christian fellowship. But if any churches require more satisfaction than this, or even this by a subscription to articles of human composition, by a succinct narration in the presence of the whole church, of so much, or of so many years experience, I cannot, for my own part, approve of their method, nor help thinking that an impediment is laid in the way of unassuming and modest Christians, the growth of others checked, and some undue restraint laid upon the subsequent inquiries, and faith of believers; and as no specimen of this kind is found in the scriptures, without a constant regard to these, our own prudence and zeal may carry us beyond the line of duty.

Churches confederated upon any other principles than those which we have described above, but ill accords with those honorable characters and dignified epithets, wherewith the sacred scriptures distinguish the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, viz. *The pillar and ground of truth, the temple of God, the glory of Christ, and the church of the Living God*\*. Come, my brethren, my joy, my crown, and rejoicing

\* 1 Tim. iii. 15. 1 Cor. iii. 16. 1 Tim. iii. 15.

in the day of Christ, let us emulate these honorable distinctions, let us display the spirit, the tempers, the life, and doctrines of Christ our Jesus, let us cut off occasion from them that seek an occasion to blast the reputation of our holy religion, and *by well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, 1 Pet. ii. 15.

I am happy to think that the Lord in his gracious providence, has happily connected me with a set of men, ambitious of excelling; let this paltry world lie buried under our feet, let the exalted honors and high prerogatives of our Immortal King, have the first place in our warmest affections, and share unrivalled the super-celestial praises of our redeemed souls; then shall we best prove the advantages of our heavenly plan, and unparalleled privileges, in the kingdom of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

### *Of Office-Power in the Church.*

CHRIST himself is the fountain of all office-power in the church, and the institutor of all those offices, to which this ministerial power is annexed; for as the church is the house, the family,



family, and kingdom of Jesus Christ, he will permit no rule there but what is purely ministerial, not legislative. "For what father would endure that any power should be exercised in his family, as to the disposal of his children, or estate, besides his own." Should men project the scheme of appointing for him a regency in his kingdom, or a deputy in his family, they reflect upon him as incompetent to manage the affairs of his own house, and in fact charge him with ignorance or neglect: let them see to it to whom this censure applies. Hence no magistrate or church has any right to ordain a new office, to add to, or diminish the power which Christ has instituted in his own family; therefore churches, although they can nominate and set apart their own officers<sup>1</sup>, yet they can communicate to them neither gifts, authority, nor power. These are the high prerogatives of Christ the King of Zion. Prudence, faithfulness, moderation, and affection, are qualifications necessary to the right discharge of every office in the church. *Authority* is the right which Christ gives to those who are properly qualified and called into office, to exercise officially those gifts, and that power which he has himself ordained; so that the choice of a church will not constitute

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv. 23. *Χειροτονήσαντες*. Per suffragia creabant, i. e. They ordained by the suffrages of the people.

the right, without the necessary gifts, nor the possession of suitable gifts, without the suffrages of the church, nor could both, but by Christ's appointment, which is, strictly speaking, the authority of the officer. *Power* in the church, is the actual discharge of those offices which Christ has ordained, such as pastoral feeding of the church by the administration of the word and sacraments, ruling in the congregation, management of the church's patrimony, and exercise of due discipline according to the laws of Christ. But as all are not, and cannot be pastors, administrators, and deacons, it necessarily follows, that there must be some in the church, to whom these powers do more especially belong; and these having been ordained to their respective offices, it is not expected that upon every recurring circumstance, they are to apply afresh to the church for her consent, as to the exercise of office, but to discharge their duty faithfully, and call upon the church to submit. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls*<sup>s</sup>. Were the officers of the church to wait the consent of the church, upon every occasion of rule and administration, it might happen that there would be no government at all, or great confusion and anarchy in the church; for such as deserve to

<sup>s</sup> Heb. xiii. 17.

be censured or reproved, may be very unwilling to submit, and if they are men of influence, they might make a party and strong opposition, yea, they might obtain a majority in their favor; yet I apprehend, even in that case, the officers of the church are nevertheless to insist upon the authority and ordinances of Jesus Christ to be attended and honored: for as the officers of the church do not receive their powers from the church, so they are not (during office) to yield them up to her, if demanded; but the church, if not satisfied, has her resort, and she may dismiss from office those whom she thinks abuse their powers. It is therefore the indispensable duty of church officers, to ascertain clearly what belongs to their office, so that on the one hand they may not tamely give up those powers received from Christ himself, nor on the other hand ignorantly *lord it over God's heritage*<sup>a</sup>. This view of the matter adds dignity to office, preserves the prerogatives of Christ, limits each man's sphere of action, and unites the church of Christ in comely order and affection. Members assuming a control, as to the exercise of office-power, or officers going beyond the limits of their commission, will end without fail either in tyranny or confusion. A society without government, government without laws, and laws

<sup>a</sup> 1 Pet. v. 3.



without an executive power, are pure inconsistencies.

Bishops and deacons are the only officers known or needed in the church of Christ. Bishops or pastors are such as labour in the word and doctrine, according to the institution of Jesus Christ, from whom they derive their authority, and to whom they must give an account. Although the church of England, absurdly enough, acknowledges the validity of papal ordination, and denies that of presbyters; and although certain legal forms continue to be imposed upon the ministers of Christ among us, yet the legislative authority of the Great Head of the church knows of no such orders or restraints as these; therefore they can neither give nor withhold ministerial validity, having no more to do with the kingdom of Jesus Christ, than with the regulation of the stars; for like them, the offices, the officers, and ordinances of Christ, will shine and keep their stations, let who will; nor would the constitution of Christ's church be any more than a civil polity, if it depended either upon princes or prelates for its existence; the bishops being the creatures of the crown, and the orders derived from them the creatures of a creature. Such a system can be but the most dependent civil constitution, less free, and less dignified

dignified than the constitution of the Court of King's-Bench, the bishop of which, although made, cannot be deposed by the crown itself; not so his Grace of Canterbury. Nor does pastoral authority originate in the gifts or graces of any man, nor even in the election of the people. Suppose it in the former, then pastoral authority would wax and wane as do these. Suppose it in the latter, then ministers could only be the amenable servants of the church. But this authority originates in the mediatorial pastorship of Jesus Christ, communicated by him alone, and consented to by the election of his people. Deny these premises, and you represent Christ as an officer, subordinate either to the church or civil magistrate. Deacons derive their authority from the same origin, and have by the appointment of Jesus Christ the chief management and application of the temporalities of the church; the relief of the poor, the provision for the table of the Lord, and the support of the ministry fall more immediately under their direction; and no ecclesiastical constitution whatever can lawfully give them any other, nor abridge them of that power, which Christ hath thought proper to ordain in respect of their office.

Acts vi. 3.

REASONS

## R E A S O N S

*For previous Examination of such Persons  
as offer themselves to the Church.*

THE nature of all voluntary societies (and such is the church of Christ) involves the right of inquiry as to the principles and characters of those who purpose an intimate connexion, seeing the peace, the designs, and very existence of society would be completely frustrated by the intromission of discordant principles and vitiated characters, inimical to the great purposes of Christian confederation; none but fools, or churches wherein the members have no fellowship one with another, can for a moment admit a contrary practice. The practice of the church at Jerusalem, in the case of Paul, sufficiently proves both the custom and right of the churches, as to previous satisfaction, concerning the principles and character of such as may demand admission, Acts ix. 26. 28. *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them, how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.*

D

And



*And he was with them (i. e. after they were satisfied that he was a disciple) coming in and going out at Jerusalem.*

Common prudence would dictate the same conduct. The church of Christ has a very important and valuable depositum committed to her care, even the commandments and ordinances of Jesus Christ, Matth. xxviii. 20. Teaching them to observe, *τηναι, to preserve, or keep all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* It is highly reasonable that she should be well acquainted with all those whom she permits to share with her in such an important trust.

The church of Christ has power to purge herself from peccant members, to cast out the scandalous and profane<sup>k</sup>; therefore, by a parity of reasoning, she has a right to reject such as are unworthy of her fellowship.

A due regard to the honor of Christ, the credit and prosperity of the church herself, renders such a precaution singularly necessary; for the promise, *Lo, I am with you always*, is strictly connected with the observation of *all things commanded*; therefore *this* cannot reasonably be expected without a conscientious regard to *that*.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7.

It was the custom of primitive churches to examine their catechumens previous to full communion<sup>1</sup>, and it has been the practice of all well-regulated churches to this day, to require a profession of faith in Christ, and of ready obedience to him, as the warrantable terms of communion with them; therefore it does not become modern societies to depart from those rules which God has so long owned and blessed, unless they could substitute some other mode, either more scriptural, or less liable to exceptions. Consider, my dear friends, these weighty considerations just enumerated, and judge with what propriety some despise this mode altogether, and others think it of so little consequence, as not to deserve a serious investigation. I would have you a wise and understanding people; acknowledging the whole truth which is after godliness, every fragment of which is more precious than gold.

<sup>1</sup> In the earliest times of the church, all who professed firmly to believe that Jesus was the only Redeemer of the world, and who in consequence of this profession, promised to live in a manner conformable to the purity of his holy religion, were immediately received among the disciples of Christ. Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. vol. i. page 117. Neither catechumens, penitents, nor those who were supposed to be under the influence and impulse of evil spirits, were admitted to this holy ordinance (the Lord's Supper) ib. page 400, and so not to full communion with the church.

*The reciprocal Duties and Obligations of  
Church Members.*

A REGULAR attendance on the ministry of that church to which they belong. It is here pre-supposed that no man will think of belonging to a church, where the ministry has not been made especially useful to him; therefore it can be no hardship to such, nor an abridgement of their liberty, who from gracious experience, are already peculiarly bound to give it the preference. If a man should frequently happen to find a piece of money in any particular spot, the prospect of gain would often draw him to the place, nor would he think it a hardship regularly to visit this same gainful ground. The flying camp are not the most successful hearers. Besides, a stated ministry has more variety in it, takes a more extensive view of truth, and is more likely to build up believers than a perpetual change. The stated minister has time to go over the land in the length and breadth thereof, to consider the particular circumstances of his flock, and to lead them into such pastures as correspond to their respective cases. If it is expected that the minister should be regular in his place, so likewise ought the people, for the same reasons apply to both.



Constant attendance at the Lord's table is another special duty of church members. Here the communion of saints more especially appears. Although our Lord thought it proper to dismiss Judas from his table<sup>m</sup>, yet he will not take it kind of any of his members, should they imitate his part by absenting themselves; nor will churches think that wilful absentees are any better employed than they should be. The benefits resulting from regular attendance on this ordinance are many; divine manifestations, spiritual growth, and assurance of salvation, are some of them. Moreover, it prevents suspicions, cements friendship, encourages the brethren, recommends church fellowship, and removes offences. I suspect both the charity and the zeal of that man who thinks these things of small importance.

Church-meetings, another duty and privilege of her members. These were well known to the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, vid. Acts xv. As in these candidates are examined and received into the church, it betrays her interests habitually to neglect them, it discourages those who offer themselves, discovers a want of zeal for her prosperity, and prevents that acquaintance with fellow-members which is necessary to peculiar affection and unity.

<sup>m</sup> John xiii. 30.

21 **Prayer-Meetings.** These also are of singular use in our churches, and cannot be neglected without loss. As the gifts of all belong to the church, here every member may have an opportunity of exercising and contributing something towards the edification of the whole; they greatly promote peace, spiritual improvement, and heal divisions; for you will not long quarrel with that man with whom you can frequently pray. God generally pours out a spirit of supplication, where he intends to bestow special blessings, and there can be no better sign of a church's increase, than well attended prayer-meetings. Many other duties might be enjoined, but there is no need of enlargement on this head; for men do not so frequently err in this case from ignorance, as from want of inclination; therefore, I shall only just mention, that to watch and stand fast in the faith, to reprove the disorderly, to relieve the distressed, to restore the faulty, to provoke unto love and good works, to bear one another's burdens, to defend the injured, to exhort, to forgive, and to comfort one another, are the indispensable duties of Christians, but more especially of such as are members of the same church.

*The Advantages resulting from the Constitution and Order of such Communities.*

COMMUNITIES, of the description above, have all the advantages which scripture conveys, or that reason could suggest; for what form of church government besides this, upon the principles of sound policy, and common prudence, can more effectually secure the end proposed, viz. brotherly-love, spiritual instruction, and gracious improvement. Men of all professions can see this, when they form any other except religious societies; alas! unfortunate for religion, that this alone should be deserted by the maxims of prudence and discretion. Let any man stand forth and point out, if he can, any religious advantage which others possess, and we do not; shew us any improvement which may be made in our plan, and we will thank him, and adopt *that*; for our contention is not for some arbitrary rule, whose advantages are not obvious, but for the scriptural and manifest privileges of the church of Christ. Here, in this church, the precepts of Christ, and the maxims of wisdom, are honored and obeyed; if your reputation is injured, or your interest hurt, you can have an adequate redress, and an opportunity



opportunity of vindicating yourself, without the expence of a suit in law. *Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it to the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican, Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17.* Let the patrons of priesthood shew us in what part of their system this precept enters, or in what community, besides that of congregational churches, it is practical. In possession of such an invincible argument in defence of our order, it is not easy to repress the language of triumph.

Here men are considered as free, rational, and responsible creatures; you are consulted, and your suffrages must be obtained too, before any material change, any minister, form, or member, can be imposed upon you; and even when liable to congregational censure, you are not affected as citizens; your liberty, your estate, and the whole of your secular interests, remain untouched. There are no prisons, gibbets, fines, or fires, in our system, even supposing the most atrocious transgression.

Here

Here friendship and Christian affections are cultivated upon the purest and most disinterested plan; you have nothing to fear from the tyranny of ecclesiastic superiours; no tything man to compel your liberality to the church; no pecuniary bribe annexed to any religious test, provoking your continuance among us: we profess no attractives besides the excellency of truth, no allurements besides the beauty of holiness, nor can we accept of any member but upon the profession of these principles. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, with vigour and thanksgiving, let us endeavour to maintain them, that the God of Peace may be with us*<sup>n</sup>.

After all that I have said of Dissenters in general, and of our own plan in particular, I do not mean to insinuate that we are *the only people, and that wisdom shall die with us*<sup>o</sup>: but I do mean to contend that ours are the most perfect churches, that we have the greatest advantages as to religious instruction and moral improvement, and that our formality, worldly spirit, and practical departure from genuine holiness, are more heinous in the sight of God, and

<sup>n</sup> Phil. iv. 8.<sup>o</sup> Job xii. 2.

will be followed by a more severe punishment than the same sins among others. It must be acknowledged, and it is acknowledged with much heart-felt concern, that there are men among us of a very unsocial turn, exceedingly circumscribed in their friendship, and not a little eccentric in their sentiments: but yet (taking us as a body) as to orthodoxy, candour, and practical religion, we will bear a comparison. In the preceding remarks, I have indulged few animadversions, and seldom made a comparison, but where the subject necessarily required it; and where I have, it has been chiefly principles, not men, which have been censured. Other denominations have to boast of worthies, as well as the Dissenters. The last year, 1790, has witnessed the removal of two men, one from the Dissenters, and another from the Church, the brightest ornaments of religion and virtue; it is easy to perceive to whom I advert. I mean the late truly disinterested and most philanthropic, JOHN HOWARD, *Esq.* also, that man of universal esteem, and most unbounded liberality, the late JOHN THORNTON, *Esq.* greater men than whom, the world cannot boast. It is with singular pleasure that I behold so many living and distinguished characters in the established church, and long may they live the honored instruments of converting and building up many souls in the faith and fear of God.



God. With equal satisfaction be it observed, that there are among the successors of the late eminent and Rev. G. WHITFIELD, not a few burning and shining lights; nor shall I fear a contradiction from any quarter, while I constantly avow the happiness of an acquaintance with several families belonging to the Rev. J. WESLEY, whose spirit, liberality, and christian deportment, would do honor to any denomination. Having paid this tribute of due praise to our fellow-christians, let us, my brethren, emulous of their virtues, strive to excel; and while we acknowledge the grace of God, as it appears in others, let us love them; but, at the same time, sacrifice no part of truth, even to please good men. I am well aware of what you have to expect from ignorant, prejudiced, or unprincipled men; they will fix the stigma of bigotry upon you, or exclaim, Censorious, censorious, and stiff Dissenters! Be not concerned, when men have nothing better to say; you may consider these expressions as the dying groans of an expiring argument, or the forlorn hope of a desperate cause: nor suffer yourselves to be duped out of truth, under the specious pretence of non-essentials; true, all truth is not of the same importance; yet, until there can be found a non-essential wilful ignorance, non-essential neglects, non-essential unbelief, and at last,

a non-

a non-essential hell, we cannot (our adversaries themselves being judges) trifle with any known sins; and all the charity we ask, is only that those who differ from us, would believe that we are conscientiously wrong<sup>p</sup>. The doctrine of Non-essentials, when applied to the rule and order of churches, is just as bad divinity, as it would be bad policy in a merchant, who should lay in fundry essential bales of property in his warehouse, but should make himself quite easy as to the non-essentials of locks and keys, or bars and watchmen, to preserve them. Thieves would have no sort of objection to this doctrine, and lazy,

<sup>p</sup> From these observations a question will naturally arise. Do you then require the belief of all the punctilios mentioned, as the terms of Christian fellowship? Far from it, it is one thing to contend for every truth, as truth, and quite another, to demand the profession of it, as the *sine qua non* of church communion: in the former case, we dare not deny a single article; in the latter, we can, and do make many abatements: it is as inconsistent to demand the very same quantum of truth from every member, as to expect they will all range to a line as to their natural stature. Perhaps I may be thought too liberal when I declare, that if ever a motion should be made of uniting Independents, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists, into one body, I would be the first to second that motion, persuaded that such an union would be far more worthy of Christianity, than the present separation and jealousy.

“ Turpe quidem dictu, sed, si modò vera fatemur,  
 “ Vulgus amicitias utilitate probat.”

careless

careless watchmen would think it quite popular.  
*I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say.*

Having finished these remarks, I have only to add, that my intention in communicating them, is to discharge my duty, and promote your fellowship with Christ, and one another in all the truth; therefore beg leave to recommend them to your candid and serious consideration. *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*<sup>a</sup>. Amen.

<sup>a</sup> Acts xx. 32.

F I N I S.



the same, and I have only to  
renew my intention in communicating again

with Christ, and one another in the truth.  
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with Christ, and one another in the truth.  
I have only to renew my intention in communicating again  
with Christ, and one another in the truth.



1874

